

## Bill's Building Blocks

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### Pasta Galore

Our church group's service project at the Community FoodBank of New Jersey was a little different this time around. Saturday morning we were led to the "clean room" situated midway through the distribution center. We were split into work groups of eight people assembled around a stainless steel table. My group included men and women, teenagers and seniors, and people of different race. An eight hundred pound gaylord filled to the brim with loose pasta sat at one end of the table; an empty plastic pallet sat on the floor at the other end. Five people donned hair nets and plastic gloves; four people scooped the multicolored pasta into small zip lock bags. The fifth person checked the bag seal, and then moved the bag from the gaylord to the table. Two more people, one on each side of the table, placed preprinted labels on each bag, and then packed the bags into small cartons. Each carton was tipped on its side where three rows of four bags of pasta were stuffed into the carton. The carton was flipped upright and four more bags of pasta were placed on top for a total of sixteen bags per carton. The eighth person built cartons, sealed stuffed cartons, and stacked cartons onto the pallet. Each pallet layer was three cartons by four cartons; the unit load was maxed out at four layers for a total of 48 cartons, a grand total of 768 bags of pasta! In two hours my group scooped, stuffed, and assembled 58 cartons of pasta, yet there was still some pasta left in the bottom of the gaylord. It was good that this tiny supply chain could provide a little help to the hundreds of thousands of food insecure people in NJ.

Gaylords are a type of specialized container used to transport and store bulk items. This gaylord was a large, five sided, double-walled cardboard box attached to the pallet. It had a plastic liner and a single piece cardboard top cap for the sixth side.

The Community FoodBank had worked out the line balancing of four people scooping to one person moving bags to two people labelling and stuffing cartons to one person building empty cartons, sealing full cartons, and stacking the pallet. The line balance worked efficiently independent of age, sex, and/or race.

Our operation was a classic break bulk process of separating bulk product, the pasta, and repackaging it for distribution to customers. Break bulk distribution centers can be found in the supply chain both downstream for product in the delivery channel and upstream for parts in the supply base.

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